

# FACT SHEET | Plain Language

*Better Government for a Better Minnesota*

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Dense forms, documents, and websites full of complicated jargon and hard-to-find links create confusion and waste Minnesotans' time. The Governor's Plain Language initiative directs all state agencies to use commonly used language, write in clear and complete sentences, and present information in a format that is easy-to-find and easy-to-understand.

## Why Plain Language?

- **Minnesotans Want Plain Language.** When Governor Dayton asked Minnesotans what steps should be taken to improve state government, hundreds of citizens and state employees weighed-in, saying state government needs to communicate better to save Minnesotans time and hassle.
- **Making State Government Better.** Using Plain Language to communicate will: 1) reduce confusion for citizens; 2) save time and resources; 3) improve customer service; and 4) make state government work better for the people it serves.
- **Plain Language Makes Sense.** Governor Dayton has ordered that all state government agencies now: 1) use language commonly understood by the audience; 2) write in short and complete sentences; 3) Present information in a format that is easy-to-find and easy-to-understand; and 4) clearly state directions and deadlines to the audience.

## How Plain Language Will Help Minnesotans

- **Better Explanations.** Each year, the Department of Natural Resources issues an annual fishing regulations guide. The 2013 Fishing Regulations manual is 99 pages long and full of complex explanations of the state's fishing laws. Right now, the DNR is writing shorter, more concise fishing regulations that will be easier for Minnesota anglers to understand. These new fishing regulations will be available online and on mobile devices before the 2015 fishing season.
- **Better Customer Service.** Each year, over 75,000 Minnesotans call the Department of Revenue with questions about how to pay their taxes. The Department recently improved its call center by writing new call prompts in Plain Language, and decreasing the number of prompts people have to listen to from 11 to just 5. Nearly 100% of calls are now completed successfully on the first try.
- **Better User Experiences.** Over 1.5 million people visit the Department of Natural Resources website every year, and 200,000 users make online purchases for campsite reservations and licenses. To improve its online services, the DNR recently created a one-stop-shop page for all State Park camping reservations and license purchases. It used to take 11 clicks from the DNR home page to reserve a campsite online. Now, campers can get to the reservations page in just two clicks.
- **Better Websites.** Over 490,000 people visit the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs website every year for information regarding veterans' benefits and services. Last year, the Department used Plain Language principles to overhaul its website. Today, more veterans can quickly access key benefits and services. Online customer service chats have increased by 200%, email subscriptions have increased by 40%, and staff time for web maintenance has decreased by 85 percent.